

Step 2. After the animal is properly restrained, observe the color and check the smell of the hoof. A rotten smell is usually indicative of foot rot and appropriate treatment should be given. The next thing to do is to clean any mud, manure, small stones, etc., from between the walls of the hoof.

Step 3. Dry conditions can make hooves difficult to trim. The best time to trim hooves is immediately after rain or heavy dew, because the hoof wall will be much softer and easier to trim. Alternatively, animals can be allowed to stand in a wet area for 2 to 3 hours before trimming. The ends of the dewclaws can be the starting place for trimming (Figure 7). The tips of the dewclaws should be removed. It is important to remove small bits at frequent intervals to avoid bleeding as a result of cutting too short.



Figure 7. Cutting the ends of the dewclaws

Step 4. It is always advisable to begin by removing very small pieces of hoof wall and toe. The toe and outside hoof wall are trimmed down to where fresh sole can be seen (stop when the sole looks pink) and the bottom of the foot is parallel to the line where the hair stops known as the coronary band (Figure 8). This can be checked by letting the foot being trimmed down and checking the balance on the foot. This will help reduce the chances of over-trimming and entering the sensitive structures of the foot. Excessive trimming can lead to excessive bleeding, pain, infections and lameness.



Figure 8. Trim hoof to a level (black line) to match the angle of the coronary band (upper white line on figure)

The foot should be kept clean and free of debris for a few days following trimming. This will help prevent infections and possible problems with tetanus. If the hoof is extremely overgrown, you cannot expect to get a proper trim in one round of trimming.

Step 5: The inside wall of the foot should normally be trimmed a little bit lower than the outside. This allows most of the animal's weight to be on the outside hoof wall where it should be placed naturally. The heel region can also be trimmed when needed. A plane or wood rasp can be used to help even up the surfaces and remove any dead sole. Once the entire trimming operation is completed, the animal should be released and examined for proper balance while the foot is bearing the weight of the animal. Corrective steps may be taken if problems of inappropriate trimming are observed.



Figure 9. Comparison of untrimmed claw (left) with trimmed claw (right)

Practice makes perfect. Hoof trimming is a skill that can take quite a bit of practice to perfect.



Figure 10. A fully trimmed foot